

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, in cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy, invites you to a panel discussion on ***"The Threat to Civic and Religious Freedom in Russia***

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**on Thursday, December 14, 2006 from 10:00 a.m. until 12 noon**

. The meeting will take place on the occasion of the release of the Commission's *Policy Focus on Russia*.□□

The Commission and the NED are pleased to announce the participation of Ludmilla Alexeeva, noted Russian human rights defender and Chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group, as a panelist.

Since Vladimir Putin gained the presidency of Russia in 2000, the Russian government has steadily retreated from democratic reform, endangering significant gains in human rights made since the end of the Soviet era, including in the areas of freedom of religion or belief. Developments indicating that progress toward democracy is being halted, if not reversed, include: curtailments of media freedom and of the independence of political parties; tighter restrictions on nongovernmental organizations, religious communities, and other civil society groups; harassment of human rights organizations; legal restrictions on freedom of assembly; constraints on the use of popular referenda; and President Putin's decision to end the direct popular election of regional governors. The panel will discuss these and other issues related to the backlash against democracy in Russia.

#### Moderator

Carl Gershman, President, NED

#### Speakers

Felice Gaer, Chair, USCIRF

Michael Cromartie, Vice-Chair, USCIRF

Nadia Diuk, Senior Director, Europe and Eurasia, NED

Ludmilla Alexeeva, Chair, Moscow Helsinki Group

Main Conference Room  
National Endowment for Democracy  
1025 F Street NW, Suite 800  
Washington DC 20004

Please respond by noon on Tuesday, December 12,  
by calling 202-378-9691 begin\_of\_the\_skype\_highlighting 202-378-9691 end\_of\_  
the\_skype\_highlighting  
or by e-mail to  
[RSVP2@ned.org](mailto:RSVP2@ned.org)

**The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Felice D. Gaer